Translation of 19870627 Parodi Pasaraya by Megan Hewitt

Newspaper Section: Fine Arts (TEMPO Magazine, 27 of June 1987, page 37-38) **"Department Store Parody" by Santeno Yuliman**

The Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (New Fine Arts Movement) *rises again with a new situational work of art,* "Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi" *["Fantasy World Department Store"] where nothing is for sale and the advertisements don't entice. It is an education of consumption?*

The *Kelompok Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* art movement started in 1975. The group dissolved quite suddenly after exhibitions in 1975, 1977 and 1979. In mid-June they emerged again to present *"Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi"* at the First Exhibition Room of *Taman Ismail Marzuki*, from June 15-30.

A 10-meter high picture of a women opening her clothes is plastered in front of the building. Written underneath, "Be Patient." The picture is a giant copy of a sticker sold in Jakarta. The gallery is decorated by small flags with the writing, "Grand Sale, Cheap, Quality Fashion," and the announcement, "Big Conversation [*obrol*]" (be careful not to read it as "clearance" [*obral*]).[1] Blocking the entrance, a petite mannequin displays the fashions of designer Keyko Audrine. After this display you come across many things: magazine covers, a car covered in stickers, advertisements, T-shirts, comics, calendars, canned drinks, and a book and magazine kiosk.

In one corner a series of artworks are projected onto a screen. *Billboard,* a T-shirt, and plastic decorations are each highlighted to create a scene of big city life. Completing the picture are cloth dolls strewn about, pretending to be buyers and sellers.

We see all of these things everyday, but only now are we aware of them as we witness these altered copies and enlargements displayed in the exhibition space.

"Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi" seems to pull our attentions toward the shape of everyday things, things that usually only receive passing glances.

1 Difficult to convey the plesetan / pun in English, I have included the Indonesian words for clarity.

Especially the things of city fantasy: advertisements, stickers, magazines, comics, calendars, etc. Art circles normally overlook these objects, but here they are elevated as legitimate "works of art." Everything is worthy of the same attentions and observations normally given to paintings and sculptures.

In this exhibit there are no single works of art carrying the name of a single artist, but rather many works. *Kelompok Seni Rupa Baru*, as we learn in their catalog, work collectively in teams. For example, there is a research team, a team determining ideas, a team for applying research results, and a team creating artworks.

The entirety of works in the *"Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi"* exhibition is presented collectively, not individually.

"Pasaraya" is the work of graphic designers (Priyanto Taufan, Oentarto and Rudi Indonesia), painters (Harsono, Gendut Riyanto, Harris Purnama, Siti Adiyati, and Dadang Christanto), sculptor (Jim Supangkat), photographers (Fendi Siregar and Wienardi), filmmaker (Bernice), and interior designer (S. Malela).

Various visual elements form a singular work of art—*"Pasaraya"* —that surrounds spectators as they stand inside to become one of the elements.

Kelompok Seni Rupa Baru calls this a "situational work of art" or "a space depicting a situation," as defined in the exhibition catalogue. The situation they describe involves an aesthetic understanding of time based on the designers' conceptualization of a *"Pasaraya."*

Time is incorporated in two ways in the exhibit. The first is an audiovisual element (video) and a sequence of storied images (comic). The second is part of the spatial arrangement forming an aisle where viewers pass. The work opens itself up to include viewers as they explore. The viewer perceives time here only as something marginal, subliminal even.

A situational work of art is meant to engage with various senses (*plurisensorial*). The force of *"Pasaraya"* is more than can be contained in a two-dimensional image. The situation is open for participation, yet it lacks three-dimensional objects for the spectators to touch.

The elements of sound are less cultivated, and why have they not included an element of smell—an experience often connected with memories of place?

Other elements that are particular to stores are also missing, such as a sense of touch and the kinesthetic experiences of reaching, grabbing, fondling, etc.

"Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi" is a department store where visitors can only look. While they can't touch or buy anything, it is still meaningful. *Kelompok Seni Rupa Baru* made a department store that doesn't sell anything except for the catalog: it is a market burlesque.

At first glance it is as if you are facing real advertisements: Lux, Camay, Mortien, etc. But as you get closer, it looks like something else. Now you read: "Blux corrects your soft skin…" There is a portrait of a woman, she looks just like the film star Marissa Haque, she is eating soap. Or, "Feel the soft rape of Somay."

How would you respond to a drug advertisement that says, "Morphine kills all your neighbors"? In the exhibit you also see company trademarks translated into Indonesian and regional languages, and disguised with strange spelling to look like foreign advertisements: jewelry by "Cartini Rewels," a bed by "Duniapillion," a timepiece by "Assale nDesso" (literally "from the desa"). The weapons of industry (advertising, trademarks) are bent into the absurd, without a function.

You will grope for meaning that is fiercer and stronger than the dolls sprawling out below the arrangement of canned drinks. There are also several dolls struck down by advertisements. Written on one of the cash registers (*kassa*) in the *"Pasaraya*" is the word, "VULGAR" (*KASSA-R*).

According to the catalog, the method of working objectively was one of the core principles in planning *"Pasaraya.*" This is probably not entirely accurate, but it must have been difficult applying the methods of "design" in preparing this exhibition.

This was apparent in the lighting, for example. They used dim lighting on the opening night of *"Pasaraya,*" like a nightclub with only spotlights on various groupings of things. They attempted to create a single atmosphere, but the dramatic lighting broke the unity of elements in the *"Pasaraya.*" The next day the dim lights were combined with regular lighting.

Uncertainty in the lighting indicates that it was not designed well. "Advanced technology" is often troublesome at TIM exhibitions. I would think

they would want to get out of that habit. Another small note: they barely touched the ceiling even though there was potential for using it in the exhibit.

"*Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi*" was refreshing for TIM. It brought viewers another type of fine art exhibition. Ordinary visitors seemed to enjoy it, but to those in fine arts circles, the work remains controversial.

Photo Captions:

Page 35 Top: Project one, Gateway.

Page 35 Bottom: A car covered in stickers in the exhibition room.

Page 36 Top: Project one, street food cart corner.

Page 36 Bottom: The department store atmosphere of project one.

Article 2 (pgs. 37-38): "From Aesthetic Pluralism to a Pluralist Aesthetic"

Art, one or many? Authoritarian aesthetic universalism. What message is contained in everyday art? A variety of communities. A variety of cultures. A variety of arts. This is the discussion.

Diversity under the alias of uniformity. This was the topic of conversation among panelists at the Daytime Discussion Panel on "New Fine Arts and Modern Indonesian Culture," hosted by the daily newspaper *Kompas* on July 8th at *Bentara Budaya*. Presented in conjunction with the exhibition *"Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi"* (see article above). Cultural debates ensued in reaction to the exhibition.

Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru gathered at the start to outline three central goals of the exhibit. First, *"Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi*" draws from the every day life and culture of the city by using materials that "contain symbols of urban form."

Secondly, the project is carried out according to a specific plan; to work collectively in stages by dividing assignments among teams, a method more

prevalent in design fields. Thirdly, their work is not considered to be like paintings, statues, or graphic design, but rather a "situational work of art."

These three goals are designed to represent anti-elitism, an energy for exploration, and a desire to recognize diversity, rather than the uniformity of arts normally presented under the alias of a pluralist aesthetic. The "sophisticated" arts of painting, sculpture, and graphic design are limited. Small, specialized groups creating single products that are expensive and too complex for most people to understand. This group points to these issues in arts discussions, cultural seminars, and educational art.

Outside of the sophisticated arts, other artworks are often considered to be "half-art" (*separuh seni*) or not even art at all (*bukan seni*). These are the artworks present in everyday environments, in mass produced designs or the products of common people.

According to Arief Budiman, *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* accuses the hegemony of a "universal aesthetic"—an aesthetic trend among certain groups in the upper layers of our society. The assumption is that there is a basic structure, or core value by which fine arts stimulate people to encounter or experience a particular aesthetic sense. This is uniformly applied everywhere.

If someone encounters a work of art and doesn't experience that particular aesthetic sense, it is their own fault; their sensitivity levels are inadequate and they must need more training, or a so-called "upgrade."

Arief sees an alignment between the core thinking of *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* and the aesthetics they advocate for: a "contextual aesthetic." The contextual aesthetic connects the experience of an aesthetic to the experience of being human within a social group. A social group can be a nation, a tribe, a religious group, a social class, a village community, a city, etc. The aesthetic experiences of one group can vary greatly from the aesthetic experience of another. There is not only one aesthetic value, there are many.

One value shared among every group, Arief refers to as "global value." This is not a transcendental universal value that surpasses time and space, existing outside of history. Globalization is a historical process and similar problems of communication are experienced within and among different

social groups. Communication between groups is “natural,” says Arief, but is also connected to questions of domination, for example, through the domination of communication technology.

Soetjiptio Wirosadjono situates everyday arts as something enjoyed, created and shared amongst society. From out of the layered strata of society, artists create with different cultural insights. Arts are then enjoyed by a consumer society consisting of people from different social strata.

Soetjipto recognizes the content and charm of everyday arts. He investigates 5 themes. First, the humans desire to see God, for example in calligraphy ing greeting cards and wall decorations depicting multiple expressions for Christ on the cross.

The second theme involves a preoccupation with looking in the mirror as a reflection of identity: within self-portraits or family-portraits, pictures of singers and movies stats, in the ideal characters of shadow-puppetry (*wayang*)—Bima, Semar, or Gatutkaca. The third theme involves discussing the dynamics of social conflict and the search for a solution.

The forth theme involves awe at the beauty of nature and the wisdom of the universe, for example in paintings of landscapes and forests, pictures of animals, and the city atmosphere. The fifth theme involves recording the dynamics of new technological findings, reflections on copyright, and the empowerment and disempowerment of people facing these issues. We come across a poster of a racecar, a sailboat, a factory, a computer, pictures of women wearing oxygen masks to protect from pollution, or of cars being smashed, and more.

The most striking issues discussed on the panel concerned the Cultural Polemics of the 30s and larger questions of nation, *The West* and *The East*.[2] Several panelists also spoke about the smaller issues such as *social groups, social strata*, and *sub-cultures*.[3]

Parsudi Suparlan identifies three types of culture in Indonesian society. The first is national culture which functions within the national atmosphere and works to structure the institutions that create the national system (comprising the entirety of the nation). Then there is tribal culture (*suku-*

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2 His italics.

3 His italics.

suku bangsa) which operates in an atmosphere of tribal interactions. The third type is public culture—the local—which is operational in local public places.

Parsudi points to the anthropological view that art forms are connected to social configurations patterned by culture. In every society there are particular ways of formulating and resisting these patterns that reflect, underline, and structure a variety of aspects of life. Then, how does Parsudi see the development of art?

Before illustrating our cultural history of the last century, Kuntowijoyo raised our attentions to the question of cultural pluralism and the position of sub-culture. Cultural democratization since the beginning of the 20th Century has fractured the symbolic monopoly of certain social classes, and interrupted cultural hierarchies: the high refinement of palace culture and the low and crude culture of the people (*rakyat*).

The loss of that hierarchy enriched the growth of new cultural forms to serve different publics. At the same time, society changed and split. The social divisions of class, religion, region, tribe, gender, age, and profession, challenged cultural creativity. Based on these groupings culture became more diverse, and some overlap formed between groups.

According to Kuntowijoyo, every group will create their own subculture, each with their own art forms and norms. Cultural heritage becomes a point of friction and of competition within cultural pluralism. This dynamic changes a culture.

One particular unit of culture may fall away because it no longer has a function. The “re-functionalization” of this unit gives new meaning. It is very important that, “different subcultures be aware of an ‘intersubcultural aesthetic’ that makes it possible for one subculture to value another, in a plural, democratic and open society.”

Hopefully we can reflect on Kuntowijoyo’s words in order to formulate an aesthetic that includes a variety of arts and diversity of art practices: a pluralist aesthetic.

That aesthetic must respond to Subagio Sastrowardoyo’s question, how do *ludruk* and *Sri Mulat*[4] become acceptable forms of entertainment for the

4 Forms of popular theater in Java.

upper, middle and lower classes of Javanese society? How can *wayang* shadow plays, with their separation of gods and kings, become a cultural product consumed by the upper, middle, and lower classes (*kelas wong cilik*)? How do we describe a situation where controversial artworks are rejected in their own social classes?

The discussion was not easy to follow and went off in every direction; from the topic of paranormal paintings, to the teachings of *Pak De* and *Pak Lik* Rendra.[5] I wouldn't be surprised if the moderator, Umar Kayam, got a headache.

-S.Y.

Photo Captions:

Page 37: Fine arts on a street food cart.

Page 38 Top: Project one, preparations.

Page 38 Bottom: Sticker exchange on a street food cart.

5 *Pak De* (*Bapak Gede*, literally Mister Big) and *Pak Lik* (*Bapak Cilik*, literally Mister Little) are Javanese terms of address.